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PART I: PRECURSORS

Terror and Mutilation in the Golden Age

Judith S. Koffler

The subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition.—Hannah Arendt¹

The origins of “the nation-destroying and humanity-annihilating power of racism”² have been traced back to ideas prevalent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, prominent among which was a belief in the natural right of conquest, a belief based in turn upon a theory of the natural superiority of certain races or classes of human beings to others.³

Although the superman doctrine makes a debut as early as the Platonic dialogues,⁴ the notion that there is something different about the rise of that doctrine in our century—something more violent, more intellectual, more totalitarian—has led some to view it as a distinctly modern phenomenon. My purpose here is to suggest that the modern form of the superman doctrine, with its justification of violence, conquest and terror, claims descent from one fearsomely developed in the Golden Age of the sixteenth century, and that the expression of that doctrine may be found in the dark undertones of a golden text, Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*.

This age, which we recall as the time of Elizabeth and Shakespeare, of Coke and Raleigh, had dawned in 1492 with what was thought to be the greatest event, excluding the Incarnation, since the creation of the world.⁵ No less important than the discovery of a new land was the discovery of its

1. H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* ix (1973).

2. *Id.*, 162.

3. *Id.*, ch. 6 (“Race-Thinking Before Racism”), 158–84.

4. The doctrine that the strong should naturally rule over the weak is one of those ancient ideas that animated the Sophists of Plato’s day. See Callicles’ arguments in Plato’s *Gorgias*, for example, or that of Thrasymachus in the *Republic*.

5. F. Gómara, *Primera parte de la historia general de las Indias*, 156 (Madrid, 1852), cited in J. Elliott, *The Old World and the New*, 10 (1969).

strange races of people, the Indians. Were they demigods, savages, or beasts, one of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel or the fabled innocents of a terrestrial paradise?⁶ And how were they to be treated? What was their capacity for reason and Christian belief? What relationship were Christians to establish with them?⁷ These questions, which captured the imagination of Europeans in the mid-sixteenth century, were largely mooted by the close of the century. For by that time, tens of millions of Indians had been annihilated in a genocide so enormous as to rival in scope the horrors of the Nazi era.⁸

Bartolome de Las Casas, a Spanish monk whose inflammatory pamphlet, *Brevissima relacion de la destruccion de las Indias*, catalogs the systematic terror and atrocities which the Spaniards inflicted upon the native population, estimates that fifteen million Indians were slaughtered in the first half-century of conquest alone.⁹ The methods rival the horrors of our own century: mass murders of the defenseless, ingenious techniques of torture

6. See Elliott, *supra* note 5, at 20–27, 42–53; L. Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians*, 1–27 (1959); *The First Social Experiments in America*, 72–73 (1935). Peter Martyr's descriptions of the strange new race painted a picture of prelapsarian innocence. To him they seemed "to lyve in the goulden worlde of which owlde wryters speake so much: wherein men lyved simply and innocentlye without inforcement of lawes, without quarrelling luges and libelles, contente onely to satisfie nature, without further vexation for knowlege of thinges to come." P. Martyr of Angleria, *The Decades of the Newe Worlde* (London, 1555), in E. Arber, ed., *The First Three English Books on America*, 71 (1885). The Eden translation contained only the first three *Decades*. The full English edition is the 1625(?) translation of Michael Lok collected in 5 *Hakluyt's Collection of the Early Voyages*, 155 (1812). The Indians, whom Peter Martyr compared to the Hebrews in their language and practice of circumcision, seemed to be a "spirituall Israel," destined to be led by the king of Spain. Arber, *supra* at 51, 169, 187. The question whether the Indians were descended from the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel was a controversial one, both as regarded the treatment of Indians in America and, some years later, as regarded the status of Jews in England. See D. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603–1655*, 130–35, 233–34 (1982).
7. Some contemporary writers used the idyllic description of the New World inhabitants as a critique of European society, contrasting the innocence and fortitude of the Indians with the barbarities of their "civilized" conquerors. Elliott, *supra* note 5, at 25–26. The more important and powerful use of these early descriptions was in the debate over the waging of war against the Indians. See L. Hanke, *All Mankind Is One*, 9–45 (1974).
8. The term "genocide" is one which frequently accompanies powerful emotions, and its use requires some explanation. Two matters are well established, however: first, the catastrophic decline in the Indian population during the sixteenth century; second, the Spaniards' policy and practice of massacre, systematic ill-treatment, and overwork of the Indians whom they subdued or enslaved. That the latter does not fully account for the former—indeed, that deliberate murders may not even have produced a demographically important number of deaths—does not resolve the issue of moral responsibility. See T. Todorov, *La conquete de l'Amerique: La question de l'autre*, 138–42 (1982); N. Sánchez-Albornoz, *The Population of Latin America: A History*, 51–60 (W. Richardson, trans., 1974).
9. B. de Las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account*, 41 (H. Briffault, trans., 1974). Horrifying accounts of the Spaniards' atrocities abound in Las Casas' *Brief Account*, which was first translated into English in 1583. Hanke, *Aristotle*, *supra* note 6, at 77. The earlier history of the Spanish Conquest by Peter Martyr, *supra* note 6, contained many lurid details of cruelty and forced labor, as did Motolinía's apocalyptic description in the

and mutilation, forced labor, death marches, and starvation. By the infliction of psychological terror, Indians were driven to suicide, infanticide, and a phenomenon described simply as a loss of the will to survive.¹⁰ Las Casas writes of the Spaniards:

[They] immediately behaved like ravening wild beasts, wolves, tigers, or lions that had been starved for many days. And Spaniards have behaved in no other way during the past forty years, down to the present time, for they are still acting like ravening beasts, killing, terrorizing, afflicting, torturing and destroying the native peoples, doing all this with the strangest and most varied new methods of cruelty, never seen or heard of before, and to such a degree that this Island of Hispaniola . . . (having a population I estimated to be more than three million persons) has now a population of barely two hundred persons.¹¹

According to Las Casas and as attested by some that employed it, the Spanish technique of terror was not wanton and uncontrolled, but deliberate, calculated to induce submission and discipline. The Spaniards would decide to carry out a massacre – or, as they rebaptized it, a “punitive attack” – in order to show terror and to make a display of their power in every corner of the land, writes Las Casas. “This was always the determination of the Spaniards in all the lands they conquered: to commit a great massacre that would terrorize the tame flock and make it tremble.”¹² One conquistador gloated in a letter to his sovereign that he had recently effected the peaceful submission of Indians by cutting off the hands and noses of two hundred prisoners for contumacy.¹³

The use of terror served the ends not only of discipline and domination but equally the more specific purposes of extracting labor and extorting gold. Among the “strange and varied methods” of cruelty catalogued by Las Casas were the death marches, wherein captives used as beasts of burden were chained by the neck to one another. When one fell exhausted and

opening chapter of his book. See Fray Toribio de Benavente, or Motolinía, *A History of the Indians of New Spain*, 37–44 (E. Foster, trans., 1950). On the wide reception in Europe of the stories of the Spanish Black Legend, see J. Elliott, *supra* note 5, at 94–96.

10. See Lok, *supra* note 6, at 405; N. Sánchez-Albornoz, *supra* note 8, at 54–56.

11. Las Casas, *supra* note 9, at 39. Typical of the bestial activities of these civilized Renaissance Christians were their massacres of whole villages of sedentary and peaceful Indians:

They attacked the towns and spared neither the children nor the aged nor the pregnant women in childbirth, not only stabbing them and dismembering them but cutting them to pieces as if dealing with sheep in the slaughterhouse. They laid bets as to who, with one stroke of the sword, could split a man in two or cut off his head or spill out his entrails with a single stroke of the pike. They took infants from their mothers' breasts, snatching them by the legs and pitching them head first against the crags.

Id. at 43.

12. *Id.* at 69.

13. R. Cunninghame Graham, *Pedro de Valdivia*, 99 (1926); Todorov, *supra* note 8, at 154. Valdivia, the conquistador in question, called the disfigurement “an act of justice,” which he was bound to perform in service to the king. Hanke, *Aristotle*, *supra* note 6, at 65 (1959).

died along the way, the Spaniards decapitated his body.¹⁴ The description of forced labor in the mines leads another monk, Motolinia, to compare it with the biblical plagues sent to Egypt. For a mile around the mines, he writes, one could not walk except on the dead bodies or bones of Indians; the corpses produced such a stench as to cause a pestilence, and so thick were the birds of prey that they darkened the sun.¹⁵

To secure a submissive population and a steady labor force the Spaniards apparently found cannibalism an effective cog in their engine of terror. One Spanish general used his captured Indians to make war on other enemy Indians and, since he did not provide food for them, had them eat the bodies of the victims.¹⁶ The Spaniards had butcher shops which hung in view the corpses of Indians, sold as food for the Spaniards' dogs.¹⁷ Some Spaniards did without the middleman and cut up Indian babies to feed to their dogs.¹⁸

Other methods of terror were effective in the uncovering of supplies of gold. Hanging, burning, mutilation, branding, and torture were used to persuade the Indians to deliver gold to their Spanish overlords.¹⁹ This display of civilized bestiality by the man of culture toward the savage was often preceded by a legal ritual as important to the Spaniard as the *Miranda* warnings are to those who cherish the American Constitution. It being thought necessary that conquests proceed according to just and Christian principles, the Spaniards adopted a curious legal procedure whereby they could legalize their massacres. This device was the Requirement, a juridical declaration which was read aloud to the intended victim before the conquistadores could legally begin the battle. It tells the Indians that if they do not submit at once, the Spaniards will enter the land with fire and sword, will subdue the people with force, and, as a concluding persuasion, adds:

We shall take you and your wives and your children, and shall make slaves of them, and as such shall sell and dispose of them, as their Highnesses may command; and we shall take away your goods, and shall do all the harm and damage that we can, as to vassals that do not obey.²⁰

14. Las Casas, *supra* note 9, at 115.

15. Motolinia, *supra* note 9, at 43.

16. Las Casas, *supra* note 9, at 82–83.

17. *Id.* at 137–38.

18. "[A] certain Spaniard went hunting for stags or rabbits and, finding no game, and wanting to satisfy his dogs, he took a baby from its Indian mother and with his sword sliced off the child's arms and legs for the dogs to share. . . ." *Id.* at 92.

19. One Indian leader who had not supplied the Spanish governor with enough gold was ordered bound, and the soles of his feet were set on fire. This produced 3,000 castellanos worth of gold. Not content, the governor ordered the torture continued until the bone marrow came out of the soles of his feet. *Id.* at 61. In Colombia, the Spanish governor used to cut off the noses and hands of native children as a means of extracting gold from the Indians. *Id.* at 135.

20. A fuller account is provided in Hanke, *Aristotle*, *supra* note 6, at 15–16, and his article, "The Requirement and Its Interpreters," 1 *Revisita de Historia de América*, 28 (1938).

That the Spaniards invoking the spell of the Requirement in fact did all the harm that they could finds independent confirmation in the studies of modern demographic historians. It is estimated that the population of the two Americas, prior to the Spanish Conquest, was between ninety and one hundred and twelve million. After contact with the Europeans, less than five percent remained.²¹ Many of the *desaparecidos* were the victims of European diseases, such as smallpox, which spread rapidly due largely to the vulnerability of a malnourished, overworked Indian population whose agricultural base had been disrupted.²² But disease, one of the most effective arrows in the quiver of conquest, was clearly not the work of nature alone. It may justly be questioned whether European diseases were more in the nature of a biological warfare against the Indians,²³ particularly in view of the fact that Spaniards vigorously defended a "final solution" to the Indian problem.²⁴

The Spanish mentality of terror, manifested at home by the Inquisition, and abroad with genocide, demanded a rigorous justificatory logic: It was a terror based essentially upon a perception of the other, be he heretic or pagan, as a subject fit for domination, instruction by torture, conquest, and

21. The estimate is that of Dobyns, "Estimating Aboriginal American Population, 1. An Appraisal of Techniques with a New Hemispheric Estimate," 7 *Current Anthropology*, 394-416 (1966). For a discussion of the figures, see Sánchez-Albornoz, *supra* note 8, at 34. Widely respected are the demographic studies of W. Borah and S. Cook, who estimate that in Mexico alone an aboriginal population of twenty-five million persons had shrunk to one million between 1515 and 1600. *The Aboriginal Population of Central Mexico on the Eve of the Spanish Conquest*, 45 *Ibero-Americana*, 4, 88 (1962). In Hispaniola, an aboriginal population of between seven and eight million persons in 1496 became extinct within a few decades after being subjected to European domination. S. Cook and W. Borah, *Essays in Population History: Mexico and the Caribbean*, 376, 401, 407, 409 (1971). See also Sánchez-Albornoz, *supra* note 8, at 32-36, 39-50.

22. Smallpox, a disease unknown in the Americas, reportedly killed more than half the Indians in some provinces. Because they did not know the cure, they "died in heaps like bed-bugs," while others died of resulting famine, there being no one to harvest food. Motolinía, *supra* note 9, at 38. On the demographic effects of disease, see Sánchez-Albornoz, *supra* note 8, at 51.

23. "That the Indians were dying like flies [of disease] was proof that God was on the side of the conquerors." Todorov, *supra* note 8, at 141. Motolinía's description of the smallpox epidemic is catalogued as the first of ten heaven-sent plagues with which God justly punished the Mexican land. Motolinía, *supra* note 9, at 38. Sánchez-Albornoz evaluates the situation more objectively:

Diseases imported from Europe or Africa by the conquistadors or slaves, and against which the natives possessed no natural immunity, seem to have been the main cause of the catastrophic fall in the Indian population. The social and economic disturbance caused by European domination rendered the Indians even more susceptible to disease-carrying germs. The breakup of their cultural life deprived them of the vitality needed to preserve their ethnic identity. Nor, of course, can one omit the acts of violence to which they were subjected.

Sánchez-Albornoz, *supra* note 8, at 65.

24. Balboa had urged the extermination of the Indians on the ground that they were "such an evil race." Hanke, *Aristotle*, *supra* note 6, at 154, n.40. The royal historian, Oviedo, championed a "final solution" to the Indian problem, assuring that it would be carrying out divine will. To kill Indians, he said, would be like offering incense to God. Todorov, *supra* note 8, at 157.

forcible conversion. The other's essential otherness—his heterodoxy or his physiognomy—stood as the Christian's own testing ground for the truth and strength of true religion. Hence, the relationship between the Christian brother and the unbelieving other was formulated as duty or social bond: If one were a true Christian, it was necessary to subdue and convert the Indian, and, if necessary, to exterminate him. In the view of one sixteenth-century fanatic, to execute a heretic was to do him a positive benefit, because the longer he lived, the more damnation he acquired.²⁵ Hence, likewise, could the European white man feel duty-bound to kidnap and enslave the black man; and thus could Christians feel bound to drive out the Jews and to expropriate their property, for to take away the means whereby the other lived and propagated his blasphemies was both to do him a benefit and to turn his property to good Christian use.

The appeal of this logic often rested upon a characterization of the other as dog, homunculus, cannibals:²⁶ a characterization which called forth, at the popular level, contempt and hatred; and at the level of ideas, the doctrine of natural slavery.²⁷ This doctrine, purporting to rest upon the text of Aristotle, had its famous historical revival in the great theological debate at Valladolid, Spain, in 1550. The question was whether the war against the Indians was just and, if so, how it should be waged. The celebrated scholar, Sepulveda, for his part demonstrated that the Indian character was one so given to all manner of abominations, to human sacrifice and obscenities, that it was fit to be conquered by the civilized Spanish nation. As inferior people, the Indians required in their own interest instruction in the excellent laws and customs of the Spaniards. The Indians are as inferior, Sepulveda declared, as children to adults, and as different from Spaniards as cruel people are from mild people.²⁸ In refutation, Las Casas met Sepulveda's slanderous falsehoods with praise for the Indians. In some respects, he argued, Indians were even superior to Spaniards.²⁹ Nevertheless, Las Casas did not question the doctrine of natural slavery; he merely insisted that it did not apply in this case.³⁰

25. St. Robert Bellarmine, quoted in A. Parry, *Terrorism: From Robespierre to Arafat*, 8 (New York, 1976).

26. Oviedo, royal historian and propagandist of just war against the Indians, wrote that the Indians were by nature inferior. Their skulls were four times thicker than normal. Fernandez de Oviedo, *Natural History of the West Indies*, 43 (S. Stoudemire, trans., 1959). Moreover, they were by disposition vicious, idolatrous, and lazy; and they committed suicide for no reason. They indulged in sodomy and ate human flesh. For these reasons, he concluded, the best solution would be for the Indians to disappear from the face of the earth, and their extermination would be an act of divine mercy. Hanke, *All Mankind Is One*, *supra* note 7, at 42–45.

27. The discussion in the text is drawn from Hanke, *Aristotle*, *supra* note 6, esp. chapters 4, 5, and 6.

28. *Id.* at 47.

29. *Id.* at 55.

30. *Id.* at 57–58.

What is remarkable about the sixteenth century is not merely the ferocity of its methods—mutilation, ingenious forms of torture, and systematic mass murder—but equally the complexity of the doctrine which animated and so elaborately justified them. For if not distinct from other animals in his brutality, man is at least distinct in needing to justify his brutality to himself. And the doctrine of the other as natural inferior fulfilled that need with a doubly vindictive logic. Not only did it justify savagery already committed, but it had the power to evoke in advance a perception of the other as a beast, and hence to elicit from the perceiver the most bestial and sadistic of actions. Even the reputedly gentle Christian sects were not immune from the power of this logic. Franciscans, known for their mild ways, turned to methods extreme and terrible, and yet claimed such methods to be consistent with their sincere beliefs. In the Yucatan, when the Indians were discovered to have reverted to idolatry, the Franciscans had them suspended by the wrists, placed heavy weights upon their bodies, and then whipped them raw and covered their bodies with burning wax.³¹ Sahagun, the celebrated Franciscan champion of Indian culture, used to wake his beloved Indians in the night and reported how he “lovingly propelled them towards Heaven by blows.”³² Other missionaries claimed that the expressions on the faces of the tortured Indians gave conclusive proof that they had finally seen God.

Ironically, the more fervently beneficent the avowed motive, the more intense was the suffering inflicted by the official torturer upon the other. It is an irony captured by Kafka in “The Penal Colony,” in which the executioner’s machine inscribed the words “Be Just” upon the skin of the victim’s rotating body, simultaneously washing away the fresh blood, only to inscribe the words more deeply into his flesh. One might isolate and attempt to define the phenomenon of which these are examples by calling it didactic terror: terror and violence inflicted by an official master, with the purpose of instructing both public and victim in the error and inferiority of his ways.³³ Such didactic terror asserts by example the mastery of the official over the victim’s heterodox life and substance. What it was too late to teach to the victim will be nevertheless an effective lesson to others, who, it may be expected, will either submit totally to domination or destroy themselves.

So effective was the Spanish terror that many Indians hung themselves

31. Clendinnen, “Disciplining the Indian: Franciscan Ideology and Missionary Violence in the Yucatan,” 94 *Past and Present*, 27, 33 (1982).

32. Hanke, *Aristotle*, *supra* note 6, at 86.

33. Motolinia, a Franciscan, believed in conversion by force. Hanke, *Aristotle*, *supra* note 6, at 21. Sepulveda urged that the Indians could be converted only when preaching was driven home by threats which would inspire terror, and seeing that so many Indians had been converted, he congratulated the Christians on their successful combination of the two. *Id.* at 67. As Hanke remarks, this was instruction by cuffs and blows, according to the old Casilian refrain, *La letra con sangre entra*. *Id.* at 85.

or took poison in acts of mass suicide;³⁴ others ceased to reproduce.³⁵ In particular, the practice of mutilation served as an excellent method for advertising the lesson of didactic terror. Indians were branded on the face to remind them not to steal no less than to impress upon them their identity as commodities. Some had been branded with letters so many times that their faces were unreadable books—so was terror inscribed by obliteration of human characteristics.³⁶

What I have called didactic terror would, of course, be a mystification without the simple recognition that the perception of the other and the justification of that perception promoted the central motive of the age—the raving greed for gold. For what appeared to have been modern about this Golden gold-mad age was the total submission of all values, honor, esteem, godliness, life itself, to gold.³⁷ History often shows that one nation's degradation of another race or nation is a phenomenon that often accompanies the lust for empire, the desire to annex the other's land or to subdue that race to slavery.³⁸ But unique in this age was how the convenient excuse of the other's bestial, inferior nature so permeated institutions, laws, and daily life as to render the violent ferocity of humans toward other humans commonplace, perhaps banal. Through his invention of the ideology of race and of a moral duty of violence to the other, civilized sixteenth-century man made cannibalism lawful.

* * * * *

It would seem a welcome diversion from this discussion of the civilized violence and acquisitive savagery of sixteenth-century Spaniards to turn to Shakespeare's England, a world which seems to have been concerned with and sometimes to have celebrated Christian principles of love, mercy, and justice. These are the themes of *The Merchant of Venice*, a play thought to reflect the structure of moral values that informed the culture of Elizabethan England. The purity of principles we meet in that play, however, may prove

34. The Dutch artist Theodor de Bry, whose horrifying engravings illustrated editions of Las Casas' *The Devastation of the Indies*, depicted scenes of Indians hanging themselves or taking poison in acts of mass suicide. Hanke, *Aristotle*, *supra* note 6, at 26; Elliott, *supra* note 5, at 95. Peter Martyr described how Indians, terrorized and reduced to slavery, killed themselves, chose to starve themselves, or died of despair. Lok, *Decades*, *supra* note 6, at 405, 413.

35. Sánchez-Albornoz, *supra* note 8, at 56.

36. Motolinía, *supra* note 9, at 42. Vasco de Quiroga, in a letter to the Council of the Indies, wrote that the Indians' faces, branded each time they were sold or exchanged to a new master, were so covered with many initials that "the countenances of these men which were created in the image of God have been transformed, by our sins, into paper." Todorov, *supra* note 8, at 143.

37. The hunger for gold is a continuing theme in the accounts. Peter Martyr wrote that the "cruel and insatiable hunger of gold had violently transported the minds of the Spaniards," so that all other things were contemned. Lok, *supra* note 6, at 405. See also Las Casas, *supra* note 9, at 41.

38. Hanke, *Aristotle*, *supra* note 6, at 48 (quoting Gilbert Murray).

to mask a system of violence and savagery, not alien to but organically allied with the imperialist violence practiced openly abroad. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in his study, *Humanism and Terror*, writes that moral principles and the inner life "are alibis the moment they cease to animate external and everyday life;" and one way to test the vitality of those principles is to set them against the legal relations, the forms of labor, and the "ways of living, loving, and dying" of a culture.³⁹ Whether Shakespeare's England rested in part upon a latent logic congenial to that of the Spanish Conquest may appear presently.

In Elizabeth's time, the stories of the Spanish atrocities and news of the massacre of millions of Indians made reading as sensational to the English as the stories of incredible profits to be plundered from the New World..⁴⁰ Richard Eden's 1555 translation of the *Decades* of Peter Martyr, which bore a frontispiece advising the diligent reader how he may "consider what commodity may hereby chance to the holy Christian world in time to come," contained some of the most lurid and horrifying details of cruelty. Shakespeare himself read Eden's translation, and Sir Francis Drake was said to have profited from it.⁴¹ But while the horror stories confirmed English prejudices and ideas on the Spaniards' innate depravity, similar atrocities committed by Englishmen were overlooked or tolerated. Sir Francis Drake, among others, was busy pillaging, burning, and sacking in the Caribbean; and although a few called him the "master thief of the unknown world," others, like his fellow shareholder merchants and the Queen herself, celebrated a profit of forty-seven to one on their investments.⁴² The notorious Sir John Hawkins matter of factly reported how he burned African towns, kidnapped Negroes, and then sold them, as he reported, "with other our merchandise" in the Indies.⁴³ While Hawkins' own reports of his raids created sensational news, a profit of sixty percent on his slaving voyage⁴⁴ must have impressed his shareholders with the wealth to be realized from the commodity of human flesh. Those who saw Hawkins' crest depicting a Negro captive and bound probably sensed the connection between quick profits and black skins. While Tudor England was imitating the Spanish methods of conquest abroad, at home its laws and institutions responded to an increasingly profit-hungry, commercialized economy. Indeed, England seems to have brought home and internalized the Spanish drive for con-

39. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, xiv-xv (J. O'Neil, trans., 1969).

40. Elliott, *supra* note 5, at 94-96.

41. Arber, *supra* note 6, at vi (1895).

42. J. Hampden, *Francis Drake, Privateer*, 244-45 (1972).

44. *Id.* at 32. Hawkins' report of his violent raid in Sierra Leone, his forcible capture of hundreds of Africans after burning their village, and his trip to the Indies to sell them as slaves was published as a pamphlet in 1569 and was widely read. *Id.* at 45. According to one source, Queen Elizabeth gave Hawkins orders to take slaves in Guinea and sell them in the West Indies. *Id.* at 28.

44. *Id.* at 26.

quest, as witnessed by the enclosure movement. For when the English gentry discovered that its profits lay in wool production, it expropriated peasants from their traditional means of subsistence and turned arable land into the sheep pastures of the powerful few.⁴⁵ As a result, the peasants found themselves transformed into paupers and vagabonds, and, like the conquered Indians abroad, under the bloody compulsion of the law. For the conquest was not complete until this new class of involuntary vagrants was fully repressed, like the Indians abroad, by laws which made them slaves, compelled their labor, and terrorized them by mutilation and death. The vagabond law of Henry VIII directed that a vagrant without a license could be tied to the end of a cart naked and whipped all through the town until bloody.⁴⁶ The vagrancy law of Edward VI directed that if a vagabond loitered for three days, he would be branded with a red hot iron and condemned as a slave to the person who had denounced him as an idler.⁴⁷ Apart from the legalization of slavery, not only did the former peasant stand in relation to his master as the Indian to the Spaniard, but the legalized violence recalled the Franciscan methods of didactic terror. The statutes directed that a sturdy vagabond be whipped until "his or her bodie be bloudie";⁴⁸ that he be branded with a red hot iron on the ear, the cheek, or the forehead; that he be beaten, chained, and put to labor, be the work "never so vile."⁴⁹ A statute of Elizabeth in 1572 provided that a vagabond above the age of fourteen years was to be burned through the gristle of the right ear with a hot iron of the compass of an inch; a second arrest for vagabondage could be punished by execution.⁵⁰ And just as the Spaniards hid their violence from themselves by the strategy of the Requirement, so did the English veil their violence under the name of lawfulness.

Mutilation was a terror domesticated into the law of debtor and creditor as well. The first bankrupt law appeared in the English statutes and provided

45. The classic work on the enclosure movement and its effects on the peasant is R. Tawney, *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century* (1912).

46. 22 Hen. VIII, ch. 12, § 3 (1530).

47. 1 Edw. VI, ch. 3 (1547). The master of the enslaved vagabond was to give him bread and water and refuse meat, and "cause him to work, by beating, chaining or otherwise." The preamble of the law, which recited the King's efforts to repress idleness, declared idle and vagabond persons to be enemies of the commonwealth and denounced the "foolish pitie and mercie of them which should have seene the said Godly Lawe executed." *Id.* § 1. The punishment inflicted was clearly designed to give to the vagabond his just desserts and to others an impressive example.

48. 39 Eliz., ch. 4 (1597). Old and disabled beggars were required to be licensed to beg. Sturdy vagabonds, on the other hand, were to put themselves to labor after the whipping. 22 Hen. VIII, ch. 12 (1530). For a second arrest for vagabondage, the whipping was to be repeated and half the ear sliced off; a third offense was punished by execution. 27 Hen. VIII, ch. 25 (1535).

49. 1 Edw. VI, ch. 3 (1547). See Karl Marx's discussion of the pertinent statutes in *Capital*, Part VIII, Ch. XXVIII ("Bloody Legislation Against the Expropriated from the End of the 15th Century"), 806-08 (E. Untermann, ed., 1906).

50. 14 Eliz., ch. 5 (1572).

that the body of an absconding debtor could be “taken and deemed to all intents and purposes out of the King’s protection”;⁵¹ thus were debtors legally transformed into alien others whom it was lawful to destroy. The bankrupt laws later provided that the debtor’s ear was to be cut off,⁵² both as a lesson to himself and as a visible deterrent to others. In short, the law recreated the relation of debtor and creditor after a model of violence and didactic terror.

As Marx perceived, what connected these phenomena—abroad, plunder and conquest; at home, conquest by enclosure and legalized violence to weak and poor—was no unsophisticated barbarism; rather, the vital nexus lay in the spectacular unleashing of the profit motive with its drive for accumulation. Even as horrified chroniclers had ascribed the atrocities in the New World to the Spaniards’ insatiable lust for gold, even so had the *auri sacra fames* transformed into ravening wolves their Elizabethan counterparts. Just as the gold-lust of the Spaniard demanded an inexorable hardness of heart, a perception of the Indian as beast to be worked to death, so did the demands of profit in England require that the dispossessed peasant be coerced with chains and branding irons, and that the bankrupt’s breach of contract be visited with violence. Well then, too, might Antonio, the bankrupt Merchant of Venice, suffer the fate of mutilation. The law of the day allowed it; thus, Shylock’s gauge merely reproduces at an imaginative level the horror embodied in the legal bonds of the debtor-creditor relationship.

Conquest, gold-lust, mutilation, enslavement, and race hatred—these are some of the darker currents of the Renaissance, and they are themes thrown in relief when we view *The Merchant of Venice* as a text embedded in the deeper text of Elizabethan culture.⁵³ They become even starker themes when we set the play within the frame of global conquest of the age. From the very outset, the action of the play—the search for Portia’s hand—is openly a quest for the golden fleece. Bassanio explains to Antonio why he needs money to win the lady “richly left” in Belmont.

Her name is Portia

. . . .

Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,
For the four winds blow in from every coast
Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece,

51. 34 and 35 Hen. VIII, ch. 4, § 5 (1542–43); see also 13 Eliz., ch. 7, § 9 (1570). Perhaps the hidden model for the outlawry provision was the Law of the Twelve Tables, which allowed creditors to tear the debtor’s body apart.

52. 21 Jac., ch. 19 (1623).

53. One is tempted to say “embedded” within the deeper text of culture, but this would also be oversimplistic. The point is that the literary work is both part of a culture and a reflection upon it. See S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 3–5, 179, 193–94 (1980); C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, esp. 448–53 (1973).

Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strond,
And many Jasons come in quest of her (I, i, 161–72).⁵⁴

The quest for the golden fleece, with its connotations of dazzling wealth, voyage, and conquest, of piracy and ill-gotten gains, suggests the enterprises of the day. Peter Martyr, for one, had written of the New World as another Colchis and of its vast wealth as a golden fleece, perhaps not without misgiving.⁵⁵ When the expedition to Belmont succeeds, Gratiano declares, "We are the Jasons, we have won the fleece" (III, ii, 241). To which Antonio's friend, Salerio, despondently replies, "I would you had won the fleece that he hath lost" (III, ii, 242).

The news has come that Antonio's cargoes have been lost at sea. But it was just the expectation of Antonio's "fleece" – the profitable return from his ventures – that had emboldened him to borrow three thousand ducats of Shylock "as an enemy" in the first place. And those hoped-for profits may be suspect themselves, indeed, ill-gotten fleece: Antonio's ships, we are told, were sailing to Africa – Barbary – to Mexico, and to the Indies (I, iii). And if some concerned Englishmen were inveighing against merchants whose greed for profit led them to make "suspicious voiajes"⁵⁶ in the New World, we may suspect that Antonio is no innocent trader but a merchant-pirate on the grand global scale, like Drake and Hawkins. Indeed, his involvement with the slave trade may be more direct than that of his fellow Christians in general, in view of Shylock's reminder, at the trial scene:

You have among you many a purchased slave
Which like your asses and your dogs and mules,
You use in abject and in slavish parts,
Because you bought them (IV, i, 90–93).

What matters is not that Antonio is a Venetian, rather than an Englishman. The relevant antinomy is that of Christian versus infidel in the pursuit of wealth. The point is that Christians have subverted their own Christian principles by those very practices which they profess to despise in others. Antonio may be no overt usurer, as Shylock is. That his gains may be ill-gotten and may breed even faster than Shylock's usury, however, is another matter.

The point about slavery, profit, and gold-lust is not merely that Christians are hypocrites, fleecers, and dealers in human flesh. Shylock's reminder is more than a rejoinder to the Duke's injunction, "How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?" (IV, i, 88), for his reply elaborates that his actions justly mirror the Christians' own practices:

54. References are to act, scene, and line of the revised Pelican Shakespeare edition of *The Merchant of Venice* (1970).

55. Arber, *supra* note 5, at 51.

56. W. Jordan, *White Over Black*, 42 (Norton, ed., 1977).

. . . — shall I say to you,
 'Let them be free! marry them to your heirs!
 Why sweat they under burdens? Let their beds
 Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates
 Be season'd with such viands? You will answer,
 The slaves are ours' (IV, i, 93–98).

Thus does Shylock remind the Christians of the violent social bond upon which they fashion their examples of justice. The slaves of Christians (vagabonds, Negroes, or Indians) are reduced to animals or, worse, to commodities, purchasable and consumed or abused as the Christian's whim dictates. The Duke's remonstrance about mercy falsely presupposed a bond of reciprocity. And that transparent falsehood elicits from Shylock a revealing, reciprocal remonstrance. If one man's flesh may be another's commodity, why should Shylock shrink from exercising dominion over the flesh of his debtor-slave, Antonio?⁵⁷

We have yet to consider the threatened mutilation of Antonio. Shylock comes so close to the horrifying feat of carving a pound of Antonio's body as to make us shudder—and not only us, but Antonio's fellow Christians as well. Despite appeals to his humanity, to mercy, Shylock remains obdurate, cold,

A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch
 Uncapable of pity, void and empty
 From any dram of mercy (IV, i, 4–6).

So fierce is Shylock's cannibalistic rage for the flesh of his fellow human that Gratiano declares:

Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith —
 To hold opinion with Pythagoras
 That souls of animals infuse themselves
 Into the trunks of men. Thy currish spirit
 Governed a wolf who, hanged for human slaughter,
 Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,
 And whilst thou layest in thy unhallowed dam,
 Infused itself in thee, for thy desires
 Are wolfish, bloody, starved, and ravenous (IV, i, 130–38).

But when the wolf-man rejoins by saying, "I stand here for law" (Cl. 142) he presents us with the grim irony that the law itself is that wolfish, ravenous desire institutionalized. The Christians' laws—both those of the Elizabethans,

57. So do I answer you.
 The pound of flesh which I demand of him
 Is dearly bought, is mine, and I will have it.
 If you deny me, fie upon your law!
 There is no force in the decrees in Venice.
 I stand for judgment. Answer; Shall I have it?
 (IV, i, 98–103).

which bore one-inch holes through the gristle of the right ear of vagabonds, and those of Venice, which indifferently enforce Shylock's contract – lie at the very core of their justice. This is brought home to us when we recall that Shylock loses the case, in the end, not because the laws of Venice prohibit taking a life upon a contract, but because the contract did not explicitly entitle him to any blood in the bargain. As lawyers would say, he failed adequately to describe the collateral. Shylock's starved and bloody desires constitute the underside of the Christian order, and they make him not the antithesis but the mirror of the reality that underlies the action of the play. We begin to suspect this point early in the play, when Shylock offers Antonio an interest-free loan, with an apparently jocular condition attached. Shylock thus introduces a sense of disequilibrium in the scene: A Jew lend money to a Christian *gratis*? Normality and the order of things seem under attack.

Connected with these troublesome aspects of violence and cruelty is the expression of race hatred, thought perhaps to be more of a problem for us in our post-Holocaust age than for Shakespeare's audience.⁵⁸ Jew-baiting and ethnic degradation are a point of honor with Antonio, who proudly admits that he spits on Shylock and that he calls him a dog:

I am as like to call thee so again,
To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too (I, iii, 126–127).

But in addition to the obvious anti-Semitism of Antonio are the racial stereotyping and ethnic slurs indulged in by Portia herself. Consider Portia's treatment of her foreign suitors. When the black prince of Morocco loses the lottery for her hand, she bids him riddance, "let all of his complexion choose me so" (II, vii, 79). Indeed, the apparently xenophobic Portia libels all her suitors by ethnic slurs or stereotypes. The Neapolitan prince is a halfbreed colt; the Frenchman is less than human; the Englishman cannot speak in an educated tongue; the Scotsman is lowlier than his neighbor, the Englishman; and the German is a drunken lout (I, ii, 34–124). Only the homebred Venetian, Bassanio, does she recognize as fit for intercourse on a level of equality. All the others – including, of course, the Englishman – she dismissed as sensual, slothful, and bestial. That Shakespeare simultaneously played to the bigotry of the day and turned that bigotry back upon his Elizabethan audience may well have created an alienation effect. To be sure, Shakespeare uses the foreign – Venice and the Venetians – to reveal the perverseness of the familiar.

With one of the central topics of *The Merchant of Venice*, usury, we may explore in greater depth the themes of violence and cruelty. Tudor England witnessed profound changes in the legal relations between human beings.

58. The more obvious example of race hatred in Shakespearean drama is found in *Othello*. See, on race stereotyping and blackness in Elizabethan England, W. Jordan, *supra* note 56, at 37–38.

Not only did the English law of this century for the first time adopt a bankruptcy law; it was the first century in which the traditional ban on usury was overturned by statute. Such a change must have been dizzying to those who held fast to traditional Christian principles. What was going on that made usury the most burning issue of the day in Shakespeare's England? What connection does this have to the experienced violence of the age? One suggestive response is found in a contemporary work, Thomas Wilson's *Discourse Upon Usury*, whose view of the commercial savagery of the day is grim. He deplores the

. . . ouglie, detestable and hurtfull synne of usurie, which, being . . . so rancke throughout all Englande, not in London onelye, that men have altogether forgotten free lending, and have geuen themselves wholye to lyve by fowle gayning, makege the lone of monye a kinde of merchandise, a thing directlye against all lawe, against nature, and against god. And what should this meane, that, in steade of charitable dealing, and the use of almose [alms] . . . hardenes of harte hath nowe gotten place, and greedie gayne is cheefelye folowed, and horrible extorcion commonly used? I do verely beleve, the ende of thys worlde is nyghe at hande.⁵⁹

Such despair as this — “the ende of thys worlde is nyghe” — is something we do not connect with Shakespeare's play, although the play is contemporary with Wilson's work and treats of the same subject, usury. The sense of gloom and the picture of universal commercial cannibalism portrayed in Wilson's *Discourse* seem on the surface to be out of harmony with Shakespeare's comedy, although clearly consistent with an appreciation of the contemporary spectacle of human cruelties described earlier. If anything, the hardness of heart, lack of charity, and insatiable drive for money seem nevertheless present in the rapacious and vengeful Shylock, who is for us a very gargoyle of greed, whetting his knife as he prepares to cut out the collateralized pound of flesh from the living body of Antonio, his debtor.

Wilson's book is instructive on the question why Shakespeare apparently identified Jews with usury, and helps reveal what common understanding an Elizabethan audience might have brought to Shakespeare's play. The topics of the day — hatred of Jews, conflict between Christian principle and mercantile capital, Christian hypocrisy in the face of an ethic of money — these were topics for Wilson. We might want to ask, for example, what prompts Shakespeare to exploit a stereotype of the Jew as hateful moneylender. Wilson informs us:

59. T. Wilson, *A Discourse Upon Usury*, 177 (R. Tawney, ed., 1925). The *Discourse*, one of many such denunciations against usury in its time, was first published in 1572. Tawney's book-length introduction explains the economic and political background of Wilson's argument with usury.

What is the matter that lewes are so universallie hated wheresoever they come? For soothe, usurie is one of the chief causes, for they robbe all men that deale with them, and undoe them in the ende. And for tys cause they were hated in England, and so banyshed worthelye, wyth whom I would wyshe all these Englishmen were sent that lende their money or their goods whatsoever for gayne, for I take them to be no better than lewes. Nay, shall I saye: they are worse than lewes.⁶⁰

Indeed, English – that is, Christian – usurers charge they care not how much interest, without respect to borrower, risk, or the borrower's undoing.

But there was another, more compelling reason why Christian usurers of Wilson's day were more evil than Jews. For the law of Deuteronomy forbidding a Jew to lend upon usury to a brother nevertheless made it lawful to take interest from others, that is, from strangers and enemies.⁶¹ This familiar Deuteronomic text had traditionally been interpreted as a canon of love, in the sense of a bond of tribal brotherhood. But now to the Christian, the biblical text became a canon of hatred. It stood as evidence of the Jews' otherness and as a warrant for legal discrimination against them, even as the Spaniards took the Indians' otherness as a lawful warrant for didactic terror.

The text of Deuteronomy brought forth strange fruit among Christian interpreters. Although the brother-other dichotomy may have commanded tribal charity to men of an earlier age, to men of Thomas Wilson's understanding, that same text issued a different injunction. Now the text was deemed to command, in the name of Christ, not so much charity to one's brother, but dutiful oppression of the other. As Wilson writes:

And where it is in Deuteromye: thou shalte lende to a straunger, in deede, doe soe still, that is to an infidell, to a Turke, and to hym that is not of the houshold of Christian faith, for that is the next way to undoe hym; so that, as to kyll a Turke or an infidel in the quarrel of Christs religion ys lawfull, so may wee oppresse hym, byte him, yea and eate him out with usurie, the readiest way surely to undoe any man livyng.⁶²

Usury, we observe, is for Wilson the equivalent of warfare on one's rightful enemies. It is an agent of injury and violence, a sword to inflict wounds upon the substance of others. Consider, Wilson asks his reader, the Hebrew word for usury, *Neschech*, which means literally a kind of biting, "as a dog used to bite or knawe upon a bone."⁶³ Well then might Shylock draw on this dental entymology when Antonio does not pay upon the appointed day:

Thou call'dst me a dog before thou hadst a cause,
But since I am a dog, beware my fangs (III, iii, 6–7).

60. *Id.* at 232.

61. Deut. 15:3.

62. Wilson, *supra* note 59, at 256–57.

63. *Id.* at 241.

Hence the image of the usurer as a cannibal, as a man who feeds upon human flesh, as a *homo homini lupus*, is fully realized in Shylock's design to "feed upon" Christian flesh and satisfy the debt by carving a pound from Antonio's body. Consider, too, how the text of Deuteronomy is twisted into a moral and political principle of just warfare against the enemies of Christ, even as the Spaniards discovered in biblical and classical texts the principle of just warfare against the Indians.

With the view that the biblical text justifies, in the name of Christ, the "eating out" of the alien, this thoroughly English doctrine of just oppression of the other, whether he be a Turk or a Jew or an infidel (or, we may add, a Negro or an Indian) plainly reflects the conquest mentality of the day and its imperative of violence toward the other. To Christian brothers we must lend freely and practice charity; to the enemies of Christ we may—indeed, Wilson says, we are duty-bound to—show our terror. Wilson's interpretation makes it clear that Elizabethan England, like Golden Age Spain, posited a fundamental division of human beings into Christian brothers, who were equals, and alien others, who were enemies of Christ, subhuman, bestial, and fit to be treated as chattels. Plainly, the two realms of brotherhood and otherhood were to be kept separate. To admit usury into the commonwealth, as Parliament was threatening to do,⁶⁴ was, according to Wilson, to destroy the ethic of the internal and replace it with an ethic of the external:

Better the world were overwhelmed, and mankind wholie destroyed, rather than synne should openly bee maintayned, and god thereby altogether defaced.⁶⁵

A legal order which licenses usury among brothers not only subverts the elementary distinction between brother, to whom we must show our kindness, and other, to whom we must show our fangs. Such a deranged order is not fit to survive. It "defaces" God, in whose image man is created, and thus mutilates the human image as well. What Wilson does not perceive, however, is that by practicing a dutiful cruelty to the other, the Christian defaces himself and becomes a beast.

The title of the play and its nominal protagonist, Antonio, are "The Merchant of Venice." But identities are not to be lightly presumed. In Wilson's *Discourse*, it is the Christian *merchant* who counts as the quintessential usurer who plays the Jew. The Christian is, however, more pernicious than the manifest usurer because the usury he practices is not open and public (as Shylock's) but latent, hidden by trade. Merchants' usury was covered by

64. The 1545 Act of Henry VIII allowed interest at the rate of ten percent. 37 Hen. VIII, ch. 9 (1545). In 1552, Edward VI repealed the Act and reinstated the prohibition against all interest as usury. 5 and 6 Edw. VI, ch. 20 (1552). About the time Wilson was writing, Parliament was about to enact the 1570 law permitting usury once again. 13 Eliz., ch. 8 (1570).

65. Wilson, *supra* note 59, at 256.

such evasive legal devices as the bill of exchange and by cunningly crafted conditions added to contracts to disguise interest, such as compensation for loss, as a gift, or as a bargain sale.⁶⁶ "Which is the merchant here? And which the Jew?" Portia asks, as if Antonio and Shylock are indistinguishable rivals. This point has often been raised by critics who argue that Antonio and Shylock are just two sides of the same coin: trade capital meeting finance capital. The unchristian treatment Antonio shows Shylock, by railing insults at him and spitting on his Jewish gaberdine, is accentuated by the fact that Antonio, extracting huge profits from his international shipping ventures, practices essentially the same trade as Shylock: he makes money from money. As we learn from the opening lines, Antonio is no petty capitalist. His ships, pregnant with precious cargoes, ply between the Old World and the New, and his profits depend upon the hidden usuries of commercial contracts and international finance. Those profits, moreover, may derive from the human usury of slavery. Such an irony is one the Elizabethan audience may have caught and taken to heart, whether it agreed with Wilson or not. Beneath the surface, Antonio the merchant contains within him the very evil Shylock alone is thought to contain—the *auri sacra fames*—the unholy lust for gold. In a base sense, they are brothers.

With one final theme, that of conversion, we may conclude our discussion of the connection between the conquest of the New World and *The Merchant of Venice*. As we recall, what turns the action upside down and alienates the letter of the contract from the apparently jocular spirit in which Shylock inserted the forfeiture is the treacherous conspiracy of Jessica, Shylock's daughter, with Christians, who convert Shylock's property at the same time they convert Jessica to Christianity. This treachery provokes Shylock beyond endurance. He wants revenge. In this context, Shylock's too often quoted speech, "Hath not a Jew eyes," cannot be read as a plea for kindness, brotherhood, and sympathy. Rather, Shylock's speech—an exercise in comparison and identification of Jewish with Christian organs, senses, dimensions—revels in Shylock's identity with the Christians; at the same time, ironically, it underscores his detachment. The Christians who would teach him mercy have revealed themselves at heart as "wolfish, bloody, starved, and ravenous":

If a Jew wrong a Christian what is his humility?
Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his
sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The
villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go
hard, but I will better the instruction (III, i, 59–64).

This is no plea *for*—this is a declaration *of*—brotherhood, that brotherhood of fellow Christian cannibals, to whom all mankind is fodder. Shylock no

66. *Id.* at 132–33 (Tawney's introduction).

longer gloats, as the Christians do, over the difference between his tribe and that of the Christians. His speech neither pleads for recognition of his essential humanity nor condemns the bigotry which the Christians display. Instead, his speech announces with irony the recognition that the Christians have won him over by their example. The brutalities practiced upon him as an other have twisted him into a mirror image of the professed and thoroughly distorted Christian. Shylock's rage for revenge is understandable as that of the oppressed against the master, as that of the alien recognized as native son. His design to mutilate Antonio gains greater horror when we see Shylock not as an outsider but as an entirely homely creature nurtured on the hidden violence of the social order.

True it is that Christian "brotherhood" and charity prevail in the end. In the face of a law which makes it a capital crime for an alien to seek the life of a citizen, the Christian Duke shows his own discriminating mercy: Shylock's life is spared at the cost of his forcible conversion to Christianity.

The rank brutality of this ending is manifold. Such mercy does the Christian order show that Shylock is condemned not to death but to something worse. His goods confiscated, bereft of his daughter, forced into submission under the terror of execution, defaced of his ethnic identity, Shylock is condemned to a life not worth living. As he exits, we suspect he may, like the Indians, die of despair: "I pray you give me leave to go from hence; I am not well" (IV, i, 409–10). The Christians impose their own badge of infamy upon Shylock, for while he lives, he serves as false witness of the gentleness of Christian culture and as true witness of its barbarism. With his Christian conversion—the legal pun of "wrongful taking" surely a conscious one for Shakespeare—the mutilation of Shylock into a Christian outwardly as well as inwardly is complete.

Thus we can see in the Golden Age of the sixteenth century the presence already of the brother-other dichotomy and its institutionalization in culture. This dichotomy permitted, even encouraged, the perpetration of Christian violence and brutality. Both in the Spanish conquest of the New World and in Elizabethan England, we see modalities of terror familiar in our own times—death, mutilation, the bloody discipline of the law as didactic tools for control. The terror of the twentieth century may seem a thing unprecedented; but it springs, in its essence, from the same impulse, the impulse to stand the alien "other" in relation to the perceiver as man to beast.